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RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0512
RUEHVN/AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 0031
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 TEL AVIV 002222

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR CA/FPP, SARAH SEXTON
DHS FOR CIS/FDNS
ROME FOR DHS/ICE
ATHENS FOR DHS/ICE, DHS/CIS AND SSA

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TAGS: [CMGT](#) [CASC](#) [KFRD](#) [ASEC](#) [CVIS](#) [CPAS](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: SEPTEMBER 2009 FRAUD SUMMARY, TEL AVIV

REFTELS: A) TEL AVIV 763, B) TEL AVIV 538 AND C) TEL AVIV 423

(A) COUNTRY CONDITIONS: Tel Aviv's consular district is considered to have medium-level fraud. Israel is a highly westernized nation with a vibrant democracy and relatively strong economy. It boasts a high literacy rate, a high GDP and relatively low unemployment. It is also a nation that travels. After visa demand peaked in the summer of 2008, there has been a noticeable decline since then, presumably due to ongoing global economic troubles.

As of 31 May 2009, the Israeli government estimated its population at 7,424,000 residents (not including foreigners), of whom 75.5% are Jewish and 20.2% are Arab. Israel currently has a rising rate of unemployment, which increased by 1.3 percent since the fourth quarter of 2008 to the current 7.6 percent rate. Of late, all of the major newspapers have published articles on immigration sweeps, arrests, and deportations of illegal workers.

(B) NIV FRAUD

STATS: During the April 1 - October 1 reporting period, 222 cases of potential fraud were referred to the Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU).

While we try to remember to click on "FPU" within the NIV program, we continue to actively remind officers to do so for every case that FPU handles. The "FPU button" statistics do not reflect the considerable time FPU and FPM has spent on Dead Sea-related fraud and organized crime concerns.

R1 VISAS: An applicant appeared at the Embassy requesting that her visa be cancelled because it had been fraudulently obtained. She stated that she and her husband had paid a rabbi to obtain R1 petition qualifying papers and that an attorney knowingly processed their fraudulent paperwork. Instead of working in the religious outreach field, the principal applicant went to work for a locksmith company (which has been accused of extorting its clients); though his R1 was cancelled, he still remains in the United States.

DEAD SEA-RELATED FRAUD: Last month, Post began an aggressive campaign to combat false and misleading information given to young, post-army Israelis by recruiters and various Web sites about "legal" work opportunities in the United States. Lured by often false promises of earning huge sums of money by selling Dead Sea cosmetics and skin care products at kiosks in malls across the United States, this particular group of Israelis have been known to work illegally on their tourist visas, expired temporary work visas or on "training" visas of questionable merit. Worker exploitation is also

of concern.

One part of this campaign, thanks to the Department of State's H/L funds, is Post's printing of 10,000 colorful, double-sided handout cards. These cards, to be given only to this particular Israeli demographic, inform them that their newly issued B1B2 visas are mainly for tourism and advise them as to which visa categories legally permit work, such as H2B. All of our line officers continue to inform everyone within this demographic that it is illegal to work on a tourist visa- as one of them said, "this is a constant refrain."

The second part of this campaign is the consular and public diplomacy sections' creation, production and posting of a nine minute You Tube video geared to these young, post army Israelis. Recruitment companies regularly utilize social networking and Internet advertising sites to specifically target and recruit these Israelis; the consular section believes that by reaching out to them using the same modes of communication, it can greatly enhance their awareness of the often severe legal consequences of working illegally in the States, such as multi-year travel bans-which impacts their future ability to legally travel to the United States.

In the video, Consul General Andrew Parker stresses that applicants be honest and truthful throughout the visa application process; illustrating what happens to applicants who do not follow this advice in this video are the personal testimonies of Israelis who were deported from the United States after committing visa fraud and/or worked illegally on tourist visas.

The third, and last, part of this campaign was the decision to hold a Web-chat session on September 16 and invite the press to the Embassy on September 17 for a behind-the-scenes visa section tour, a debut screening of the video, and a round-table discussion on these issues. Despite a busy political/diplomatic week, several of Israel's major news outlets, in Hebrew, Russian, and Arabic expressed major interest in the subject and produced significant results with major exposure to the Israeli public. A direct link to the You Tube video is <http://usembassy-israel.org.il/consular/niv/index.aspx>. As of October 7, 2009, it had been viewed 2,251 times, making it the most popular video on Post's You Tube Channel.

Parallel to the above campaign, Post's FPM continues to develop and strengthen working relationships with CBP at various POEs and ICE and now has an e-mail distribution list for Dead-Sea related issues.

Additional, detailed information on Dead-Sea related fraud will follow septel (REFTEL C is the first Dead Sea cable and contains background information on this ongoing situation).

DOCUMENT VENDOR FRAUD: Post continues to monitor fraud from a document vendor who previously worked at Post. Post also testified at the sentencing hearing for another visa document vendor who had perpetrated long-term fraud. This vendor, composed of a father and son team, sold fake pay slips, letters of recommendation and university registration receipts to applicants who had previously been refused visas from approximately 2003-2007. The two pled guilty to over 20 cases of fraud; their sentence will be determined in late-October 2009.

PIMS' ADVERSE TOOL: Since the NIV program's upgrade to 4.06 in late July, the ADVERSE tool for PIMS has become an extremely valuable tool in Post's fraud prevention toolbox. Currently, at least five petitions have been marked as ADVERSE in the NIV system and are in the process of being revoked.

(C) IV FRAUD: N/A.

(D) DV FRAUD: N/A.

(E) ACS AND U.S. PASSPORT FRAUD

CERTIFICATES OF NATURALIZATION: From March-September, Israeli airport immigration officials referred to FPU and ACS seven cases involving problematic Certificates of Naturalization. These certificates list the holder's nationality, but not their place of birth, enabling them to conceal their true POB. The seven cases involved naturalized U.S. citizens who had concealed their Israeli nationality, changed their POB and, on some occasions, altered their

names when they applied for their first U.S. passport. Some Americans claim they obtained their U.S. passports with false POBs in order to protect themselves from potential terrorists. Further, according to Israeli law, an Israeli citizen is obliged to depart/enter Israel with their Israeli passport. By holding a foreign passport, and misrepresenting their POB, they may be attempting to conceal their Israeli departures/entries for several reasons: 1) to qualify for Israeli social security benefits, which are generally only granted to Israelis living in Israel (there may be exceptions for citizens abroad); 2) to avoid stop orders/criminal records, which are not tracked on their foreign passports; 3) to evade the mandatory draft; and 4) to avoid the bother of carrying/maintaining two sets of travel documents. At any rate, these cases do not appear to be linked to any serious criminality or terrorism. Still, we continue to be skeptical of the stories people use to justify the "errors"; ACS, FPU and RSO/DS continue to investigate these cases. Because the DS-11 form does not require a recently-naturalized Amcit to present a birth certificate or other evidence documenting POB, Post will likely continue to see cases of falsified POBs.

EGG AND SPERM DONATION: This continues to be an issue at Post, with another three cases seen during the past summer (see REFTEL B). All three cases involved dual-national U.S.-Israeli single mothers over the age of 40, who became pregnant using donated eggs and sperm. Per 7 FAM 1446.2-2, without "a legal and literal biological/genetic relationship," the mothers are unable to transmit U.S. citizenship to their children. Because these children do not fall under any of the Immigrant Visa categories, such families may become "stuck" in Israel with no avenue for legal residence in the United States.

FRAUDULENT PHYSICAL PRESENCE DOCUMENTS: One of ACS' key concerns is the presentation of fraudulent physical presence documents for CRBA cases under INA Sections 301 and 309. In section 301(c) transmissions, the definition of "residence" in the United States has not been fully or specifically defined by CA or the INA. However, Post received CA guidance that work, study or birth in the United States constitutes residence, whereas vacationing or visiting family in the United States does not constitute residence. In several CRBA cases involving sections 301 and 309, the family attempting to document a child as a U.S. citizen submitted incorrect Affidavits of Physical Presence and/or falsified documents in order to "prove" that a parent had resided in the United States. The most commonly forged documents are school letters, transcripts, report cards and letters purportedly from neighbors.

FALSE ADDRESSES ON SSN APPLICATIONS: ACS occasionally encounters falsified addresses on SS-5 (Social Security Number) applications. During the past year, our two FBU claims representatives and an ACS FSN caught about a dozen SS-5 applications that listed a falsified address that falls under Post's consular district. In reality, the applicant's true address belongs to CONGEN Jerusalem's district; the falsified address enables the applicant to avoid applying for SSA services there. In questionable cases, for proof of residence, FBU now asks applicants to submit a utility bill or bank statement that has been mailed to their home address as proof.

(F) ADOPTION FRAUD: N/A.

(G) DNA TESTING: N/A.

(H) ASYLUM AND OTHER DHS BENEFIT FRAUD: NOTHING TO REPORT.

(I) ALIEN SMUGGLING, TRAFFICKING, ORGANIZED CRIME

NEPALESE FRAUD AND TRAFFICKING: Israel has a high number of third country nationals working in professions such as agriculture and care-giving. Thus, Post has seen a dramatic increase in Nepalese nationals (as well as nationals from the Philippines and India) applying for visas to the United States for tourism, accompanying disabled or elderly employers and as volunteers. Post soon discovered that the Nepalese nationals who had been granted visas were either applying for asylum upon their arrival in the United States or staying in the United States illegally. It could well be that some of these Nepalese nationals are really Tibetans-we are unable to prove this theory. A July ADIS check of Nepalese who were issued visas showed that 20 of 36 overstayed their visas (8 could not be found, 1 extension and there were 8 timely departures). Due

to these findings, visa issuances to third-country nationals were reduced, particularly the Nepalese, going from an approval rate of 47 percent from January-June 2008 to 12.5 percent for the same period in 2009.

As part of this fraud trend, a large group of Nepalese care-givers applied for visas claiming that they were traveling on an organized tour to Dallas, TX sponsored by a disabled Israeli. The Nepalese applicants claimed that they had voluntarily provided this Israeli with assistance every weekend and, as compensation, he was taking them all to the United States. Some of them also said he was paying for their lodging and expenses, while others said they would be paying for all their expenses. These Nepalese allegedly paid large sums of money as "finder's fees" to the sponsor of their Israeli residency, on the assumption they would eventually move onward to other countries. As expected, no formal employment link could be established between this Israeli and these Nepalese care-giver applicants. Since they had weak ties to Israel, low salaries and no previous travel history, all of them were refused 214(b). After these refusals, the Israeli "sponsor" failed to appear for his own scheduled visa interview. After FPU and ARSO-I referred this suspected trafficking case to the GOI, it tentatively agreed to prosecute the smuggler(s).

Another possible connection to this suspected trafficking is a relatively sophisticated scam involving a Nepalese "volunteer" program. Two Nepalese applied for B1/B2 visas in order to take advantage of a "volunteer opportunity" to provide care-giving services to Americans. They submitted letters written in excellent English describing the U.S. program and their potential responsibilities. Like the above group of Nepalese, they were refused 214(b).

FRAUDULENT ISRAELI AGRICULTURAL STUDY/TRAINING PROGRAM: A Laotian "student" applied for an F-1 visa to study English at the Wisconsin English Second Language Institute; as part of his qualifications, he said he was participating in an agricultural study/training program in Israel. Upon additional interviewing, he eventually admitted that he and about 50-60 other South East Asian nationals had been brought to Israel under the auspices of an official agricultural study/training program, but were actually working long hours every day on a farm and not studying. He said he was forced to work anywhere from 10-17 hours per day for about 2,000 NIS/month (\$500 USD) and that over half of his salary was turned back to the owners of the farm to pay for a non-existent "teacher" and for a return ticket home. Typical of trafficking programs' MO, he also said he had paid for his ticket from Vientiane to Israel (\$900). FPU entered lookouts and watch phrases in the CCD for "Moshav Side David" and "Moshav Seed David" and other associated names. Upon Post's referral, the GOI accepted this for prosecution of human trafficking.

ERITREAN-COLOMBIA SMUGGLING: Post was notified that large numbers of Eritreans were applying for Colombian visas in Israel and that all of them had been smuggled or had entered Israel via the porous Sinai border. Initially, about eight Eritreans applied for visas to travel to Colombia from here, producing likely fraudulent bank statements "proving" that they possessed sufficient funds. Soon after these visas were issued, twenty more Eritreans appeared at the Colombian Embassy; at this point, the Colombian consul decided to contact Bogota and was instructed to stop issuing visas to Eritreans. Post suspects that they were traveling to Colombia in order to attempt to illegally enter the United States.

ORGANIZED CRIME: FPU and FPM are in the process of compiling an extensive list of organized crime families and their members, checking to see whether any of them have visas. Some visas were revoked on the basis of an undisclosed criminal history; unfortunately, due to Israel's policies, many organized criminals are "clean." When this data gathering process has been finished, Post plans to draft a cable on this important issue of concern.

(J) DS CRIMINAL FRAUD INVESTIGATIONS

Post's ARSO/I continues to provide noteworthy assistance to our fraud prevention efforts. Among many other things, the ARSO-I has been crucial to the process of convincing the GOI to accept fraud cases for prosecution.

(K) HOST COUNTRY PASSPORT, IDENTITY DOCUMENTS AND CIVIL REGISTRY

Legislative delays continue to plague Israel's development of a biometric database, which would include identification cards and passports.

(L) COOPERATION WITH HOST GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

Post's contacts with host government officials in the Ministry of Interior, Israeli National Police, Border Patrol, Airport officials and the Israeli Defense Forces continue to be robust.

An Israeli court recently approved the extradition of brothers Meir and Itzhak Abergil (of their eponymous crime family) to the United States to face charges of drug dealing, extortion, money-laundering and murder. The brothers are in the process of appealing the court's approval to the Israeli Supreme Court.

(M) AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN: NONE, OTHER THAN AS MENTIONED ABOVE.

(N) STAFFING AND TRAINING

In June, the FPU team met with airline station managers at Ben Gurion Airport to discuss the Carrier Liaison Program. In July, FPU provided introductory training to US Airways check-in agents, as they had just established flights to/from Tel Aviv. The introductory training involved presentations aimed at familiarizing airline staff with U.S. documents and visas and a session on impostor detection.

FPU Tel Aviv continues to regularly share information and resources with FPU Jerusalem; likewise for Tel Aviv's ARSO/I and Jerusalem's RSO office.

Tel Aviv's FPU consists of a Fraud Prevention Manager (Deputy Consul General and NIV Chief Wendy Vincent), a full-time Fraud Prevention Assistant (Ariella Shamash), an ELO who handles the daily fraud portfolio, and two NIV FSN backups for the Fraud Prevention Assistant.

FPU provided one-on-one fraud training to two newly arrived ELOs in this reporting period.

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